

*“All the treasures of wisdom and
knowledge are hidden in Christ.”
Colossians 2:3*



CHRISTIAN TEACHER OR TEACHER WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

**Applying God's Word
to your life as a teacher**
Supplementary guide and
video series

By Megan Patterson

CHRISTIAN TEACHER OR TEACHER WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Notebook to accompany the video series

<https://transformational.education/resources/personal-blogs/megan-patterson-articles>

How to use these notes:

Begin with prayer. There are Scripture readings in the videos and you will often be asked to reflect on a Bible passage. Ask God to help you to apply His Word to your professional life as a teacher.

For each video there are several questions to guide your thinking. There are rarely any “answers” as the questions are of a personal nature. However, some questions have accompanying notes; these are marked with an asterisk*. At times you may find it helpful to watch the video again to help you to answer the questions.

If possible, take time to do the suggested Bible reading and reflect on the topic before watching the video.

My prayer is that as a result of this study you will love God, your subject and your students more. Do get in touch to share your reflections and discoveries.

Megan Patterson

International.transformational-teaching@sim.org
www.sim.org
January 2023

Cover photo: Ruth Guinness

Introduction

"All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ." Colossians 2.3

To what extent does your classroom resemble an enthusiastic exploration of the works of God, like treasure hunters digging in a mine?

The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not hidden to be beyond our reach but rather "as treasures in a mine which has already been opened and from which, by diligent search, a constant supply of precious stones may be extracted."¹

To answer the question: "Is it possible to be a teacher who is a Christian and not necessarily a Christian teacher?" we perhaps need to ask ourselves whether we have recognised God as the source of knowledge. When we teach, we are un-hiding Him,² His Word and His works. In the classroom we are exploring Creation to un-hide the Creator.

Whatever subject we are teaching our calling is related to the uncovering of truth. That realisation is energising and a motivation for all our classroom activity; it will make the difference between a teacher who is a Christian and a Christian teacher.

¹ Carson H.M. (1960) Colossians and Philemon, an introductory commentary. Tyndale Press p.57

² Beech, G. R. (2013). Un-hiding God in the 21st Century. IAPCHE Contact: Academic Insert, September, 2013.

Video 1: Who are you?

Preparatory reading 2 Corinthians 5.11-20

1. Are you different from your non-Christian colleagues? In what ways are you different?
2. What does an ambassador do?*
3. Does your classroom reflect the fact that you are representing the good and holy God? Give examples of things that honour Him. Give examples of things that dishonour Him.
4. "Our core identity as Christ followers shapes the content, method and means of our teaching." How would you explain this sentence to another teacher?
5. What are the hindrances to planting yourself by the streams of living water?
6. How can Christian teachers help each other to remain in the vine, John 15.4-5?
7. Key question on the video: How does who you are influence the way you teach?

Notes:

*2 An ambassador represents his own country in another country.

We are living in a foreign country, a country which is under the enemy's rule, Satan's rule. Our home country is heaven, God's kingdom. God sends us to represent Him in the enemy's country - your school. You are an ambassador of King Jesus.

Personal notes:

Video 2: To whom does your classroom belong?

Preparatory reading: Isaiah 44

1. How does the fact that your classroom belongs to God influence the way you teach?
2. What is idolatry?*
3. What changes do you need to make in your classroom now that you understand that it belongs to God? Give specific examples.
4. Write out the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6.9-13) and pray it with your classroom in mind.

***This is what God the LORD says -
He who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it.
I am the LORD, that is my name!
I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.
Isaiah 42.5-8***

Notes:

*2. Revelation 7.11-12: "They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying: Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Worship is putting God in His rightful place in our lives and in our world. It includes singing His praise in church but it is much more than that. He deserves the love, adoration and service of our whole lives all the time. He should be recognised by all the world as God, Creator, Lord and King of Love. If I am not worshipping Him then I am guilty of idolatry.

Personal notes:

Video 3: Who is in your classroom?

Preparatory reading: Matthew 25.31-40

1. What does Jesus mean when He says in Matthew 25.40 "I tell you the truth whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did for Me"?
2. How does this apply to the children and young people in your classroom?
3. What changes do you need to make in the way you interact with your students?
4. How does the truth of Philippians 2.9 -11 make you feel?
5. How would you explain to someone else the phrase: "We teach from the future."*
6. Give an example to demonstrate how you might teach from the future in your classroom. Share your examples.
7. How often do you pray for each of your students individually? Are there changes you need to make in this regard?

Notes:

*5. Harro van Brummelen in his book *Walking with God in the Classroom* describes four phases of learning: Setting the stage, Disclosure, Reformulation, and Transcendence. The fourth, transcendence, is often left out in a busy classroom but it is essential if we are to teach from the future. When we ask: 'What does this mean for you?' 'How can you use this?' we encourage students to think about how they can live in obedient response to God and offer the results of their learning to others for the healing of the nations. Disease, brokenness, pain and death were not part of God's original intention for the world and will have no place in the new universe. When we 'teach from the future' we have an eye to the restoration of all things and to the part we (teacher and students) can play in working to bring that about as co-workers with God. 2 Corinthians 4.18. Revelation 21.4. Philippians 2.9-11.

Personal notes:

Video 4: What is shaping your thinking?

Preparatory readings: Matthew 22.36-40, Romans 12.2, 2 Corinthians 10.3-5

1. How do you understand the phrase: "Love the Lord your God with all your mind?"
2. What are some of the things prevalent in the culture in which you live which you know to be contrary to God's Word?
3. We live in a theatre of God's glory. When were you conscious of this in your classroom recently?
4. *"God intends that the world He has made be a constant sight-and-sound display of His power, glory, faithfulness and love."*
What difference does it make to your teaching when you are aware that you are uncovering hidden treasures for the children? (see Introduction)
5. *This is what God the LORD says - He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it I am the LORD that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. Isaiah 42.5.*
If you have become used to thinking that God has nothing to do with your lessons take time to confess the idolatry of your heart. Reflect on Colossians 1.16-17 and Isaiah chapters 42 - 45.

Personal notes:

Video 5: How do we know what we know?

Preparatory Reading: Colossians 2.1-4 and Romans 1.19-20

1. In what 3 ways does God reveal Himself to us?
 - a. Psalm 33.9
 - b. John 1.1-5 and 14
 - c. Psalm 119.105
2. What difference will it make to you in your classroom as you become more aware that God is revealing Himself in the subject matter of your lessons? *
3. Give an example of a time when you have prayed like Moses: "If your Presence does not go with me do not send me up from here."
4. Describe an occasion when you have been deeply conscious of the glory of God?
How often do you see His glory in your classroom?
5. If your Presence does not go with us do not send us up from here.... Now show me your glory. Exodus 33.15-18

Notes:

*2. The awareness that, as teachers, we are un-hiding truth has a profound effect on both our method and our motivation. (See introduction.) We are dependent on God moment by moment as we uncover what God is revealing through our subject matter, we depend on Him to enable both the teaching and the learning.

Our motivation grows as we see ourselves as channels of God's revelation to our students and as we become more excited about the subject we teach.

As Geoff Beech says: "The sciences allow us to better understand God and His Creation; the study of history allows us to better understand God's work through people; the study of language allows us to better understand His revelation to us, to work out His Kingdom purposes for us and to relate more deeply to Him and to others; and so on. As we unhide truth

for ourselves and our students, delving deeply into that which Science and other subjects can help us find and by reading the Scriptures through biblical worldview glasses, we work to see our God more clearly and to unhide Him for those in our care.”³

Personal notes:

³ Beech, G (2011) The un hiding of knowledge (unpublished paper)

Video 6: What's your worldview?

1. Jot down the four worldview questions as they appear in the video.
2. What definition of worldview is given in the video?
3. a. How conscious are you of your own worldview?

b. Why is it important to examine your worldview?
4. "As Christian teachers we need the Bible to penetrate to the marrow of our being so that we start to think biblically about everything." How can this happen when a teacher's life is so busy?
5. Label the visual valet as it is explained in the video so that you have a record of it:

Visual Valet



6. The speaker says: "We don't fit the framework into the classroom, we fit the classroom into the framework." Can you give examples of occasions when you have seen the biblical framework being fitted into the classroom? Often these occasions are contrived and unnatural.
7. Now give examples of how you will fit your classroom into the framework. Remember this is possible without you verbalising it to the students. *

a. Start with Creation. What elements could you begin to incorporate into your classroom because of your conviction that God is the Creator of all things. Colossians 1.16-17. For example: What inter-disciplinary activities will you engage in to foster an awareness of the connectedness of the curriculum?

b. How does the reality of the Fall help you in your classroom?

c. What changes will you make in your classroom as you see it fitted into the biblical story of redemption.

d. As you think of the certain future restoration of all things how will you help the children to be agents of kingdom transformation?

8. What do you understand by the expression: "Life is a whole"?

Notes:

*7. A very significant part of this exercise is to help you, the teacher, to be encouraged as you increasingly see your classroom fitting into the biblical story. There is much to celebrate as we think of God as Creator. We gain better understanding of our students' difficulties and their sins as we consider the Fall. Redemption offers hope of transformation. Restoration energises and motivates us. Think of as many concrete examples for each strand as possible; you will find your enthusiasm for whatever you teach grow!

Personal notes:

Video 7: What is the purpose of education?

1. What would you say is the purpose of education?

2. To what extent are you seeing the world the way God sees it? Re-read 2 Corinthians 5.11-20 as you answer.

3. What does it look like to “connect our lessons to the progress of the gospel in all of its dimensions bringing shalom and blessing to all the earth.” Use the questions below to help you. *

- 3a. What was God’s intention in relation to this unit of study?

- b. How has the fall spoilt it?

- c. How can I help my pupils to respond?

- d. What end could we envisage that will help to bring God’s kingdom on earth?

4. Why is it possible to teach in this way even when you are not in a Christian setting?

Notes:

*3. Your answers to questions 7a-d accompanying video 6 will also help you to answer this question.

Personal notes:

Video 8: Is education ever neutral?

Preparatory reading: Read Acts 17.16-34

1. What can you learn from the way Paul addressed his hearers in Athens? What in his approach could you emulate? *
2. You have close friends whose daughter, Chloe, is about to start school. Your friends tell you that some Christians send their children to the local government school and others use a Christian school. They ask your advice on this matter. What will you say? *
3. To what extent is the teaching in your establishment "fair, balanced, sympathetic to other viewpoints and generous to the perspective of others?" Do you agree that it should be? Why?
4. Why is intellectual humility important?

Notes

*1. Paul connects with the people to whom he is speaking . He is respectful about their idols (v.22) although he is greatly distressed by them (v.16). He is knowledgeable about their belief system and their culture, he is able to quote one of their poets. (v.28). He reasons (v.17)and explains clearly and boldly.

*2. "The frightful tragedy is that the claim that education is religiously neutral is a myth of gigantic proportions. It is a lie that has had the most fearful implications for generations of Christians and their children. One of the loudest trumpets that Christians must blow today is the clarion call that denounces this myth. Education has never been neutral not can it ever be. The founders of modern education acknowledged this to be true, the evidence of what goes on in myriads of classrooms daily acknowledges this to be true, and even modern thinking humanists recognise that this is so."⁴

Personal notes:

⁴ Edlin, R. (1999) The Cause for Christian Education Chapter 2 The Myth of Religious Neutrality in Education, Openbook Publishers: Adelaide, Australia

Video 9: What is your greatest need as a Christian teacher?

1. What are the two things that make a great teacher according to Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670)?
2. What would you say is your greatest need as a teacher?
3. 'Life is all of a piece.' To what extent is this true for you?
4. What are the dangers of separating your professional life from your devotional life?
5. Think about the phrase CORAM DEO. What changes will you make in your classroom as you become more conscious of teaching before the face of God, in the presence of God, for the glory of God?

***Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.
Psalm 86.11***

Personal notes:

Helpful resources:

Beech, G. (2015) Christians as Teachers: What might it look like? Wipf and Stock: Oregon, USA

Beech, G. & E. (2019) Transforming Elephants: Deep transformation in Christian schooling, UK: Amazon

Edlin, R. (1999) The Cause for Christian Education. Openbook Publishers: Adelaide, Australia.

Gould, P. (2019) The Outrageous Idea of the Missional Professor. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock

Greene, A. (1998) Reclaiming the Future of Christian Education: A transforming vision
Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications

Klassen, H. (2015) Visual valet: Personal Assistant for Christian Thinkers and Teachers (Kindle edition)

Van Brummelen, H. (1998) Walking with God in the Classroom. Seattle, WA: AltaVista College Press

I am deeply grateful to colleagues at CATE for their support of this endeavour both financially and in offering advice and encouragement.



To what extent does your classroom resemble an enthusiastic exploration of the works of God, like treasure hunters digging in a mine?

The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not hidden to be beyond our reach. Whatever subject we are teaching our calling is related to the uncovering of truth.

That realisation is energising and a motivation for all our classroom activity; it will make the difference between a teacher who is a Christian and a Christian teacher.

Sponsored by SIM
through Transformational Teaching



Supported by

